News and Notes

APHA CALLS FOR INCREASES IN FUNDING FOR THE NATION'S PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM

The executive director of the American Public Health Association (APHA), Georges C. Benjamin, urged Congress to increase funding to the nation's public health system. This would eliminate providing money on a crisis-to-crisis basis and provide for sustained care and research to protect Americans from everyday illnesses, threats, and emergency situations. Benjamin's call stems from Congress's proposed 8.5% budget cut from 2003 to 2004. He stated during the testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, "In the absence of a robust public health system with built-in surge capacity, every crisis 'du jour' also forces trade-offs-attention to one infectious disease at the expense of another, attention to infectious disease prevention at the expense of chronic disease prevention and other public health responsibilities."

More information is available from: URL: http://www.apha.org/news/press/2003/funding.htm.

FIRST DHHS STUDY RELEASED CONCERNING ADULT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS

The first Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) report focusing on the amount of physical activity in American adult's daily lives, "Physical Activity Among Adults: United States, 2000" was released in May of 2003. This study measures a person's usual daily activities including work, leisure time, or some combination of the two. The report utilized data from about 32,000 interviews conducted in 2000. Usual daily activities included commuting, running errands, performing household chores, or any other activities not performed during leisure time; the level of physical activity was determined by how much "moving around and lifting or carrying things" occurred during these usual daily activities.

This is the first study that did not focus solely on leisure time activities. The results showed that one in five American adults engage in a "high level" of overall activity, while one in four engage in little or no activity. The study also found that, in general, men are more likely to engage in a high level of activity than women. In addition, the study found a positive association between the amount of usual daily activity and leisure time activity. The study also concluded that education,

marital status, income, and geography affected the amount of daily activity.

The full report is available at: URL: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/news/releases/03news/physicalactivity.htm.

FUTURE SHORTAGES IN LONG-TERM CARE

DHHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson in conjunction with DOL Secretary Elaine Chao released a report showing that the United States will require three times the current number of long-term care providers for the aging baby boomers by the year 2050. Approximately 5.7 million—6.5 million nurses, nurse aids, and home health and personal care workers—will be needed by 2050, compared to the 1.9 million needed in 2000. The report emphasizes retaining current longterm care workers as well as attracting new ones and outlines steps to reduce the shortage of workers in the future. These measures include implementing the Nursing Reinvestment Act, signed by President Bush in August 2002, which creates financial assistance programs for nursing students and supports the nursing profession through public service announcements. It also calls for outreach programs targeting faith-based and community-based programs to increase the number of volunteers for family respite and caregiving.

The full report is available at: URL: http://aspe.hhs.gov/daltcp/reports/ltcwork.pdf and URL: http://aspe.hhs.gov/daltcp/reports/ltcwork.htm.

STUDY FINDS BLEEDING STROKES IN YOUNG AND MIDDLE-AGED ADULT POPULATION ARE LARGELY PREVENTABLE

A study headed by Joseph P. Broderick, MD, of the University of Cincinnati, concluded that by using high blood pressure drugs and altering behaviors, subarachnoid hemorrhage (SAH) is largely preventable in young and middle-aged adult populations. Unlike other types of strokes that occur most often in the elderly, SAH often occurs in younger populations. It occurs when a blood vessel on the surface of the brain ruptures and bleeds, primarily into the space surrounding the brain. Though SAH constitutes only 3% of all strokes, it is one of the most deadly forms, with a 39%–50% death rate.

The study used data from 44 hospitals from 1994 to 1999, gathering data from 312 men and women be-

tween the ages of 18 and 49 with no prior stroke record, and compared this data with a control group of 612 subjects who had not had a stroke. Significant differences were clear between the two groups. Smokers were 3.7 times more likely to experience SAH as non-smokers, and high blood pressure and family history were major contributors to risk. This was also the first study to examine the effects of cocaine use on risk for SAH. In addition, the study found that those with lower body mass index were about 1.5 times more likely to suffer a SAH.

More information is available at www.americanheart .org or www.strokeassociation.org. A full report may be viewed in the Journal of the American Heart Association from May 23, 2003.

IMPORTANT MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HIV/AIDS VACCINES

A survey recently conducted by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), a component of the National Institutes of Health, determined that many Americans incorrectly believe that a preventative vaccine for HIV/AIDS has already been developed. The survey included a national survey of 2,000 American adults and three smaller surveys of communities most affected by HIV/AIDS. Forty-eight percent of African Americans and 28% of Hispanics polled reported that they believed that an HIV/AIDS vaccine already exists and is being kept secret. These misconceptions and the lack of accurate knowledge about HIV vaccine research demonstrate the ongoing need for public education about efforts that are underway to develop a vaccine that prevents HIV infection. However, the study did conclude that there is widespread support for development of a vaccine. It concluded that 84% of those surveyed believe that efforts to develop a vaccine to prevent HIV infection are "extremely" or "very" important compared with other current medical research needs. Currently, more than 60 research facilities are testing potential vaccines and have thousands of volunteers. In addition, NIAID is sponsoring multiple clinical trials of HIV vaccines.

For more information on HIV/AIDS vaccine research visit www.niaid.nih.gov or www.hvtn.org; further information concerning the study is available at www.nih.gov/news.

LINK BETWEEN AGRICULTURAL PESTICIDES AND INCIDENCE OF PROSTATE CANCER

The Agricultural Health Study (AHS), a long-term study of pesticide applicators and their spouses, has discovered exposure to certain agricultural pesticides may be associated with an increased risk of prostate cancer among pesticide applicators. The study is being conducted by the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, and the Environmental Protection Agency and includes 55,332 subjects from North Carolina and Iowa who were followed for around 4.3 years. The study concluded that methyl bromide, a fumigant gas used nationally to protect crops from pests in the soil and to fumigate grain bins and other agricultural storage areas, was linked to the risk of prostate cancer in the entire group. Exposure to six other pesticides was associated with an increased risk of prostate cancer only among men with a family history of the disease. Current cases will continue to be followed and new trends will be looked for as the study continues.

More information on the AHS is available at their homepage: http://www.aghealth.org. More information of findings of AHS is available at http://cancer.gov /newscenter/pressreleases/Agricultural Health Study.

RAPID ASSESSMENT OF THE CONDITION OF CHILDREN IN IRAQ BY UNICEF

UNICEF has conducted an evaluation of the current rate of malnutrition among Iraqi children under the age of 5. The study demonstrated that acute malnutrition or wasting away among these children had jumped from 4% before the war to 7.7% currently, almost doubling. Acute malnutrition sets in quickly and is a good indicator of the overall health of children.

Prior to the war, UNICEF ran 3,000 Community Child Care Units (CCCU) that were staffed by approximately 13,000 volunteers, their purpose being to screen children for malnutrition and to catch children in the early stages. However, due to the fighting, this system has collapsed. Efforts are being made to reestablish the system; the facilities in Umm Qasr and Baghdad have been reopened.

More information on efforts by UNICEF is available at www.unicef.org.